

Message Text

SECRET

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15

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 SAM-01

L-02 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05 IO-10 SCCT-01 /066 W

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O 190921Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4359

S E C R E T BANGKOK 9042

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH

SUBJ: NOTE TO THAI GOVERNMENT RE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

REF : STATE 115952

1. THE DCM SAW FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI CHOONHAVAN AT 0945 HOURS MONDAY, MAY 19, TO DELIVER THE TEXT OF THE U.S. NOTE AND ACCOMPANYING ACCOUNT OF THE BACKGROUND OF THE MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT (REFTEL). CHATCHAI READ THE NOTE CAREFULLY TWICE, SHOWED NO EMOTION AND ASKED WHETHER IT WAS INDEED AN APOLOGY. THE DCM SAID THAT, FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY TO EXPRESS ITS REGRETS, WAS INDEED AN APOLOGY. WHETHER THE WORD "REGRET" OR "APOLOGIZE" WAS USED MADE NO DIFFERENCE. THE INTENT WAS CLEAR AND IT WOULD BE MOST UNFORTUNATE TO GET INTO A SEMANTIC HASSLE OVER THE USE OF WORDS. CHATCHAI ASKED WHETHER HE COULD PUBLICIZE THE NOTE AS AN APOLOGY. THE DCM SAID THAT THERE WAS NO OBJECTION TO THIS.

2. THE DCM ADDED THAT OUR NOTE CONTAINED THE THREE ELEMENTS WHICH THE RTG HAD INDICATED TO US THAT IT REQUIRED. IT EXPRESSED OUR REGRETS, IT REITERATED OUR RESPECT FOR THAI SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE AND SAID THAT THE ACTIONS TAKEN TO RETRIEVE THE MAYAGUEZ WERE UNIQUE AND WOULD NOT BE REPEATED. THE DCM SAID WE TRUSTED THE RTG

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WOULD USE THIS NOTE, WHICH WAS EXTREMELY FORTHCOMING,

TO CALM THE CURRENT SITUATION AND END THE HARASSMENT OF THE U.S. EMBASSY.

3. CHATCHAI BRIGHTENED AND SAID HE WOULD DO HIS BEST. HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER FIRST AND WOULD THEN HAVE THE NOTE TRANSLATED (HE SENT IT OUT FOR TRANSLATION WHILE THE DCM WAS THERE) AND THEN CALL IN THE LEADERS OF THE DEMONSTRATION AND SOLICIT THEIR SUPPORT. HE FELT HE COULD ACHIEVE THIS BY THIS AFTERNOON. THE DCM URGED HIM TO MOVE QUICKLY SINCE THE CURRENT DEMONSTRATION WAS SERIOUSLY INTERFERING WITH THE CONDUCT OF NORMAL BUSINESS AND, THE LONGER IT CONTINUED, THE GREATER THE RISK OF AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT WHICH WOULD FURTHER EXACERBATE THE SITUATION. CHATCHAI AGREED. (AS OF 1500 HOURS THE FULL VOLUME HARANGUES IN FRONT OF THE EMBASSY WERE CONTINUING.)

4. THE DCM THEN ASKED CHATCHAI WHETHER PRESS REPORTS WERE CORRECT THAT AMBASSADOR ANAN WAS BEING RECALLED. CHATCHAI SAID HE WOULD BE RETURNING WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS FOR CONSULTATIONS AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRIME MINISTER. THIS SHOULD NOT, HOWEVER, BE VIEWED AS A PUNATIVE ACTION BY THE RTG. CHATCHAI SAID THAT, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, HE COULD INFORM THE DCM THAT THAILAND WOULD SOON BE ROTATING SOME OF ITS AMBASSADORS, INCLUDING ANAN. THE DCM ASKED WHETHER IN THIS PROCESS THE RTG HAD GIVEN ANY THOUGHT TO SEPARATING THE POSTS OF AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES AND TO THE UNITED NATIONS? CHATCHAI SAID THEY HAD AND HOPED TO DO SO. HE FELT THAT BOTH JOBS WERE FULL TIME AND THAT IT TOOK A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO HANDLE BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND MULTILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED NATIONS. AS A RESULT, THEY WOULD HOPE TO SPLIT THE JOBS WHEN ANAN LEAVES. CHATCHAI GAVE NO INDICATION OF A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR.

5. COMMENT: MUCH APPRECIATE QUICK SUPPORT AND FORTHCOMING NOTE. AFTER DCM'S CALL, CHATCHAI TOLD PRESS RTG WAS SATISFIED WITH THE "LETTER OF APOLOGY", THAT THE INCIDENT WAS NOW CLOSED AND THAT HE LOOKED FORWARD TO

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RESUMING THE PREVIOUS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE USG. THE FACT THAT THE HARASSMENT CONTINUES MAY RESULT FROM THE FACT IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME (HOPEFULLY BRIEF) TO WIND THINGS DOWN. IN ANY EVENT, BELIEVE WE HAVE DONE ALL RTG COULD EXPECT OF US. INITIATIVE IS NOW UP TO THE THAI. WHITEHOUSE

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